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Artistic Expression and Free Speech

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM



THE 2009 HONORS INSTITUTE

FREE SPEECH IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

FEATURING NICHOLAS KRISTOF

JANUARY 26, 2009

Artistic Expression and Free Speech

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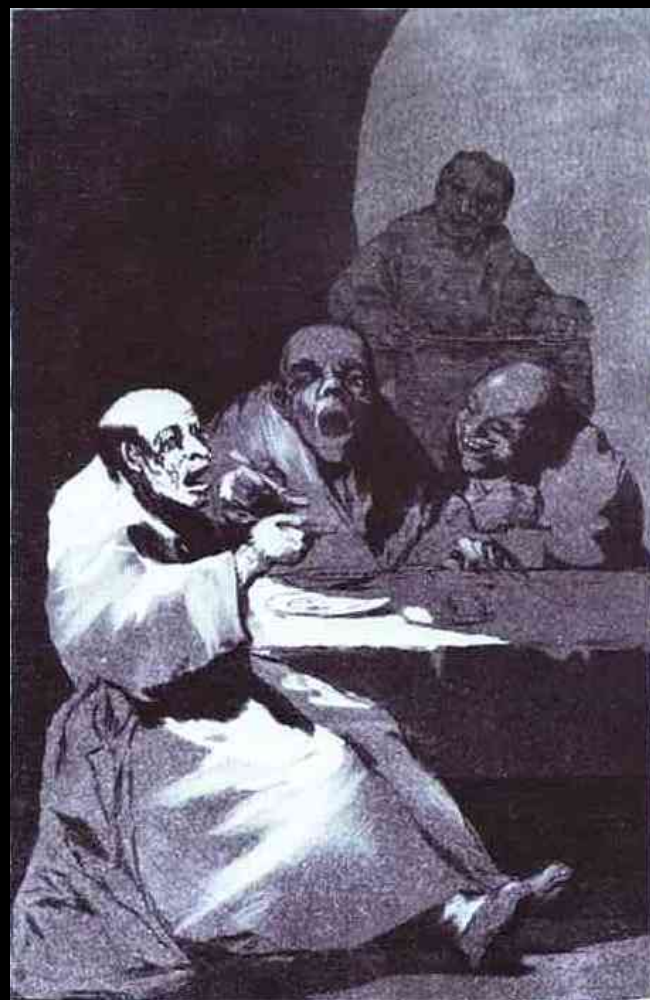
Michelangelo





Goya, *Los Caprichos*, 1799





Están calientes.



Aquellas polbas



Así su Abuelo.



Censorship

- The supervision by one individual or group over the artistic expression of another individual or group.
- This definition assumes that person or group A has the power to *control* the expression of person or group B. Usually the power is exerted for political, religious or moral reasons. In other words, A can prevent B from making or showing work that conflicts with A's political, religious or moral point of view.
- Rita Gilbert, *Living With Art*, 5th Ed., 1998.

The Bill of Rights of the United States of America

Amendment I

**Congress shall make no law respecting an
establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free
exercise thereof; or abridging the **freedom of speech**, or
of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to
assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress
of grievances.**

Fourteenth Amendment –

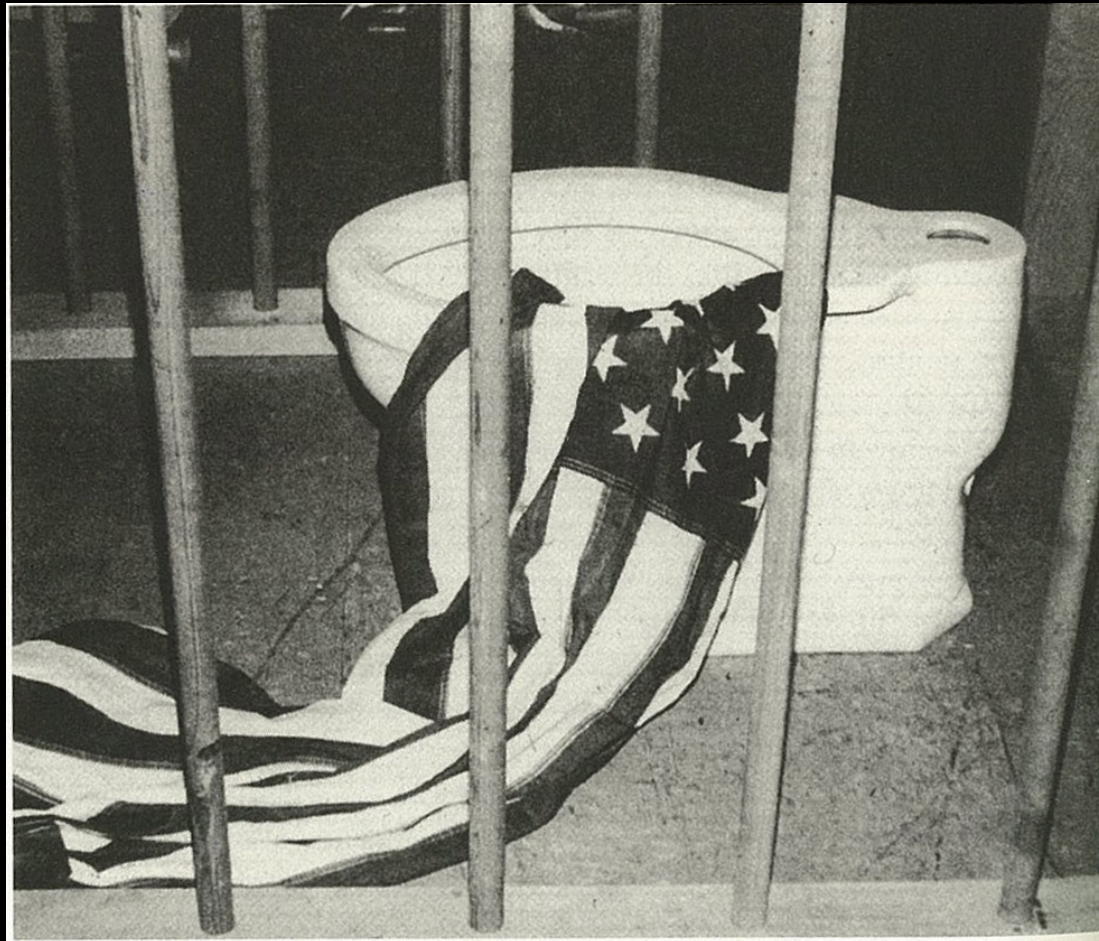
.... No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the

United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws

Horatio Greenough
George Washington as Zeus, 1841



Kate Millett, *The American Dream Goes to Pot* (1970)
Originally exhibited at *People's Flag Show*, Judson
Memorial Church, New York, 1970



3. Kate Millett, *The American Dream Goes to Pot* (1970).

Courtesy of Kate Millett.

“Dread” Scott Tyler, *What Is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?*
Installation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1988; later
included in the traveling exhibition, *Old Glory: The American Flag in*

Contemporary Art.





Robert Mapplethorpe



Mapplethorpe Controversy

- Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1989
- Jesse Helms protested federal funding for “obscene” work
- Corcoran cancelled show
- Washington Project for the Arts took on the exhibit.
- Hartford CT – no problem
- Berkeley, CA - no problem
- Cincinnati, OH – problem
- Police closed Contemporary Arts Center
- Dennis Barrie & Center indicted on obscenity charges
- Six months later found not guilty
- Juror “We thought the pictures were lewd, grotesque, disgusting. But...art doesn’t have to be beautiful or pretty.”

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self-Portrait* (1978) (photograph from the *X Portfolio*)



The X Portfolio formed the basis for an obscenity prosecution against the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, which hosted *The Perfect Moment*, in 1990. The Center and its director, Dennis Barrie, were acquitted at trial. Marjorie Hein, Free Expression Policy Project

Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ*



www.artnet.com

Piss Christ

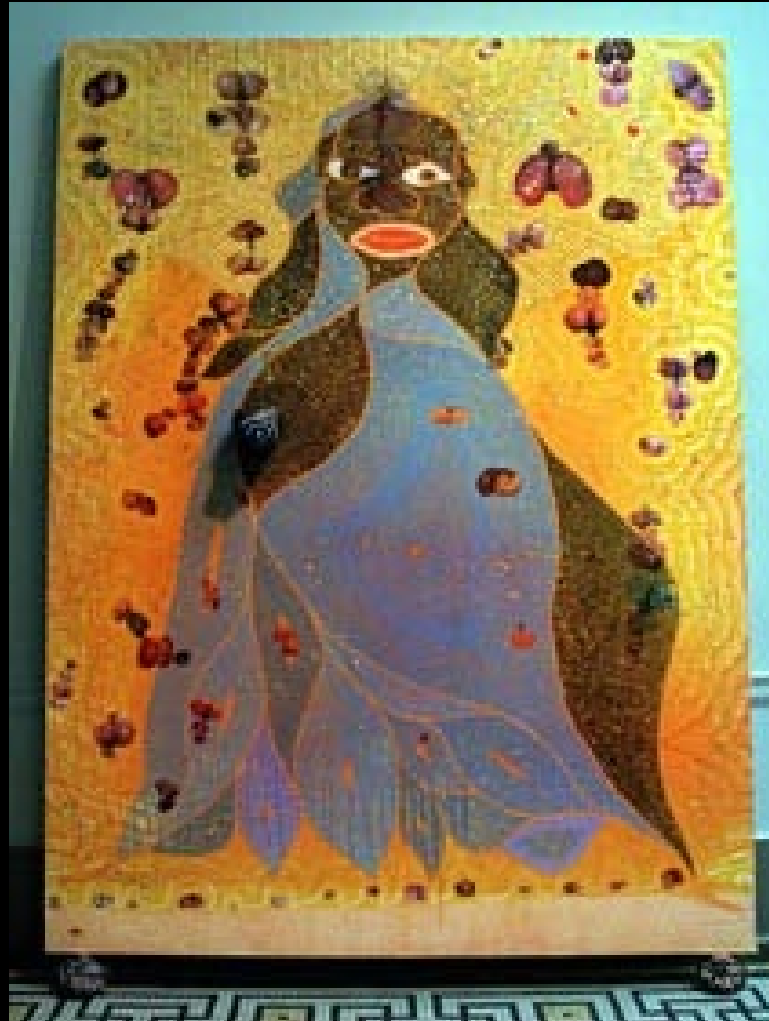
- Exhibited in 1989
- Detractors, including United state senators Al D'Amato and Jesse Helms, outraged that Serrano received \$15,000 from the taxpayer-funded National Endowment for the Arts for the work.
- Supporters argue the *Piss Christ* is an issue of artistic freedom and freedom of speech.
- The journal *Arts & Opinion* describes the controversy as "a clash between the interests of artists in freedom of expression on the one hand, and the hurt such works may cause to a section of the community on the other."
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piss_Christ
- "[Sacrifice, Piss Christ and Liberal Excess - opinion & response.](#)". *Arts & Opinion*.

- Sister Wendy Beckett, an art critic and Catholic nun, stated in a television interview with Bill Moyers that she regarded the work as not blasphemous but a statement on "what we have done to Christ" - that is, the way contemporary society has come to regard Christ and the values he represents.

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piss_Christ

Eleanor Heartney (July 1998). "[A consecrated critic - profile of popular television art critic Sister Wendy Beckett](#)". *Art in America*.

Chris Ofili, “Holy Virgin Mary” (1996)



Rodin, The Kiss



Rodin's "The Kiss" in Utah, 1997

- 1997 - BYU withheld exhibiting four works from "The Hands of Rodin" exhibit
- Not in sync with the community values (LDS Church)
- 200 BYU students protest
- 2001 - University of Utah, Provo, Marcia and John Price Museum Building – exhibits "The Kiss"

Jerry Boyle, “Holier Than Thou” (2003)

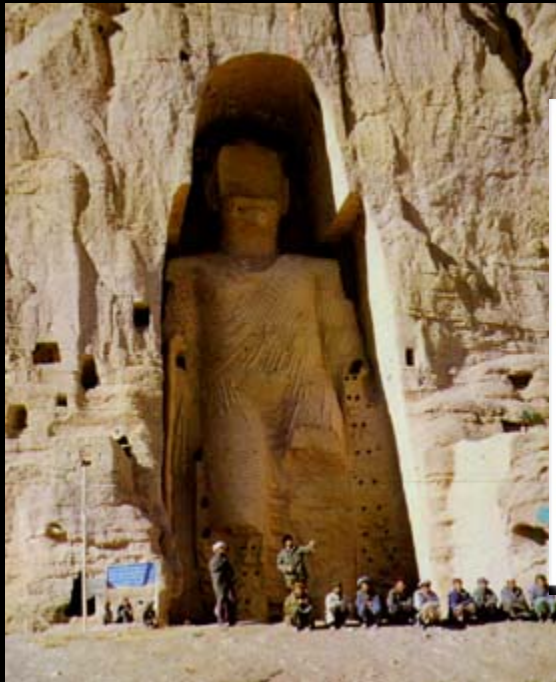


Each year, Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas sponsors an outdoor sculpture contest; once selected, the winning entries are displayed around campus for several months. One of the five winning entries in 2003 was Jerry Boyle's "Holier Than Thou," showing the upper body of a clergyman that critics claimed was grotesque. A professor and a student filed suit in federal court demanding the removal of the statue on the ground that it conveyed an impermissible state-sponsored message of disapproval of the Catholic religion. The Court of Appeals disagreed, concluding that, viewed in context with the other sculptures on campus, "any reasonable observer ... would understand the university had not endorsed that message."

Marjorie Heins, Free Expression Policy Project

Buddha in Afghanistan

March 2001



www.moonbattery.com



www.motalib.wordpress.com



www.moonbattery.com

Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1972



Spiral Jetty from Space



Damien Hirst – *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*



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The Free Expression Policy Project

<http://www.fepproject.org/issues/artcensorship.html>

The National Coalition Against Censorship

<http://ncac.org>

Pink Rabbit

